



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE 59TH GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

**DELIVERED BY
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Mr. President,

I have the honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this 59th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

For me personally it is a singular honour to address this august institution for the first time and to congratulate you, Mr President, on behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, on your election as President of this distinguished Conference. I would like to take this opportunity also to express our appreciation and gratitude to Director General Yukiya Amano and to the Secretariat for their dedicated work for the benefit of the whole IAEA family.

On this occasion, the Holy See, along with various states, welcomes and congratulates the Republics of Djibouti and Guyana on becoming members of the IAEA.

Mr. President,

The Holy See commends and supports all the activities of the IAEA which foster international cooperation in the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and integral human development, and which prevent nuclear proliferation and contribute to nuclear disarmament. Seventy years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and after nearly six decades of successfully confronting many challenges, the IAEA remains an indispensable agency for promoting human security.

Many around the world are not aware of the IAEA's role in promoting sustainable and integral human development. The IAEA helps open up interesting possibilities for harnessing the power of science and technology to address pressing problems of poverty, health, and environmental degradation.¹ Peaceful applications of nuclear technologies allow many States to come closer to the achievement of their development goals and are in keeping with Pope Francis' call, in his recent Encyclical Letter, "Laudato Si'" for responsible stewardship of our human and natural resources. Nuclear technologies are improving agriculture, pollution control, water management, nutrition and food safety, and infectious disease control. Of special note is the invaluable contribution the IAEA is making in fighting cancer, one of the great scourges of mankind, especially in some of the world's poorest countries. These and other efforts are improving the quality of life for millions of people. Clearly, the IAEA's contributions to sustainable development must continue to be supported and enhanced to meet the many challenges that remain.

Mr. President,

In his recent encyclical, Pope Francis highlights a fundamental challenge posed by our technological prowess: those with the knowledge and resources to use modern

¹ Cf., Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter 'Laudato Si', n. 102.

technologies have unprecedented power over the future of humanity, “yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used.” The failure to use technology wisely is due to the fact that “our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience”.² Too often, necessity, defined in terms of utility and narrow conceptions of national security, is the prevailing norm governing the uses of technology, rather than responsibility, solidarity and cooperative security.

Nowhere is this more evident than with the power unleashed by the splitting of the atom. As Pope Francis reminds us, the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain “the symbol of mankind’s enormous destructive power when it makes a distorted use of scientific and technical progress and serves as a lasting warning to humanity so that it rejects forever war and bans nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction”.³

The world’s nuclear arsenals are much reduced since the height of the Cold War, but they remain excessive. Moreover, the dubious strategic rationales for maintaining and even strengthening these still bloated arsenals are morally problematic. Nuclear deterrence can hardly be the basis for peaceful coexistence among peoples and states in the 21st century, since it is unable to be broadly responsive and tailored to the security challenges of our times; furthermore, it risks being used in a way that would cause severe humanitarian consequences. Instead of being a step toward nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence has become an end in itself, and risks, compromising the non-proliferation regime and undermining real progress toward a nuclear-free world. Moreover, as Pope Francis said in his message to the Vienna Conference last December, “Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty”.⁴ Billions are wasted each year to develop and maintain stocks that will supposedly never be used. How are these expenditures consistent with progress toward nuclear disarmament? How are they consistent with the Non-Proliferation Treaty?

Mr. President,

The discriminatory nature of the NPT is well known. The status quo is unsustainable and undesirable. Just as wealthy nations have incurred an “ecological debt” that demands more from them in addressing the environmental crisis,⁵ nuclear weapons states have incurred a nuclear debt. Because of the risks their nuclear arsenals pose to the world, nuclear weapons states bear a heavy moral burden to ensure that their nuclear weapons are never used and to reduce their stocks substantially while taking the lead in negotiating a nuclear ban. While it is unthinkable to imagine a world where nuclear weapons are available to all, it is reasonable to imagine, and to work collectively for, a

² Ibid., nn 104, 105.

³ Pope Francis, Angelus Address, August 9, 2015.

⁴ Message of Pope Francis on the Occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, December 7, 2014.

⁵ Cf., Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter ‘*Laudato Si*’, nn. 51 and 52

world where nobody has them. A world without nuclear weapons is not just a moral ideal, but must be pursued through concrete policy initiatives, particularly on the part of the nuclear powers.

The Holy See has no illusions about the challenges involved in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Progress has been made through the NPT, the CTBT, START, NEW START, unilateral initiatives and other measures. But these steps are limited, insufficient, and often frozen in space and time. Precisely because of growing tensions, the nuclear powers must renew arms control and disarmament processes. In this regard, a very important sign would be to make real efforts towards facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT, which represents the best hope of stemming nuclear proliferation and is a key to progress on nuclear disarmament. Much more concerted steps must be taken to break the political deadlocks, evident in the failure of the recent NPT Review Conference, that prevent other responsible institutions from playing their rightful role in the non-proliferation and disarmament processes. The three Conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the humanitarian pledge adopted by more than 100 states are positive developments that deserve support. Also deserving of support is the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, especially in the Middle East. For its part, the IAEA's indispensable role in nuclear safety and waste disposal, verification and monitoring will become ever more important as the use of peaceful nuclear energy expands and as the world moves toward nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

The Holy See welcomes the IAEA's participation in the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Holy See values positively this agreement because it considers that the way to resolve disputes and difficulties should always be that of dialogue and negotiation. The JCPOA is the result of many years of negotiation on an issue that had caused grave concern within the international community. It is clear that the agreement requires further efforts and commitment by all the parties involved in order for it to bear fruit. We hope that the full implementation of JCPOA will ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme under the NPT and will be a definitive step toward greater stability and security in the region.

In a region where there are already too many conflicts, to reach an agreement on a sensitive issue is an important step that will promote dialogue and cooperation on other issues. In this respect it is worth stating once again that the way for the solution of conflicts in the Middle East, which must be addressed at global and regional levels, is that of dialogue and negotiation and not that of confrontation. It is true that this path requires courageous decisions for the good of all, but it is one that will eventually lead to the desired peace in the region.

Mr. President,

These and many other steps that must be taken will require the world to face a fundamental moral challenge. The logic of fear and mistrust must be replaced with a new global ethic. We need a global ethic of responsibility, solidarity, and cooperative security adequate to the task of controlling the power of nuclear technology so that it is only used for peaceful purposes and is no longer a sword of Damocles hanging over the earth.

All States have the right to national security. But reducing security, in practice, to its military dimension is artificial and simplistic. Security also requires socio-economic development, political participation, respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law, and cooperation and solidarity at the regional and international level. Is it not urgent to revisit in a transparent manner how States, especially nuclear weapons states, define their national security? As Pope Francis said last December, “The security of our own future depends on guaranteeing the peaceful security of others, for if peace, security and stability are not established globally, they will not be enjoyed at all”.⁶

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the Holy See attaches great importance to the successful cooperation of the IAEA with other relevant International Organizations in ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies. The IAEA deserves continued support as it seeks to fulfill, in ever more effective ways, its indispensable role in ensuring international security and promoting sustainable and integral human development, especially in the poorest regions of the world.

Thank you.

⁶ Message of Pope Francis on the Occasion of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, December 7, 2014